



Skookum Kids 2019 Legislative Agenda

1. Direct and fund the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study outcomes created by Resource and Assessment Centers (RAC) and other related programs.

Created in 2013 by HB 1261, the Resource and Assessment Center (RAC) program type delivers emergency short-term care for children new to foster care. While more than 2,000 children have received this service, outcomes for them have not been comprehensively studied and there is not broad consensus on the full range of benefit resulting from these programs and the state's investment in them.

The organizations which operate RAC programs theorize that their service enables higher quality placements, resulting in greater placement stability, shorter timelines to permanence, and improved retention for foster parents. But what does the data show?

The questions we would like to see answered by data analysis would include:

- Where are children placed after they leave a RAC or RAC-like facility?
 - At what rate are they placed with relatives vs. foster parents?
 - How often are they returned home immediately?
- How many times are children moved in the 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, etc. after placement in a RAC or RAC-like facility, and how does that compare to their peers?
- How long do children who stay at a RAC or RAC-like facility remain in care and how does that compare to their peers?
- How likely are children placed at a RAC or RAC-like facility to be placed with their siblings?
- Are children who stay at a RAC or RAC-like facility more likely to receive their initial health screen within the 5 day guideline?
- Is there a statistical difference in the number of medical events for children who engage with a RAC or RAC-like facility?
- Are foster homes who accept placement of children directly after their stay a RAC or RAC-like facility more likely to continue fostering than homes receiving children directly from CPS?

We believe answers to these questions are knowable through skilled and thoughtful analysis of data that the Division of Children Youth & Families (DCYF) already collects, and could unlock a greater understanding of how the first week of a child's foster care



Skookum Kids 2019 Legislative Agenda

stay impacts their overall outcomes. We lack only a research partner with the necessary access to the data, and we believe that WSIPP is best positioned to do this work.

2. A more flexible WAC for Skookum House (WAC 110-145).

Skookum House is categorized as a Resource and Assessment Center (RAC). The WAC pertaining to this style of group care facility is written assuming a high level of risk. We are held to the standards for a program that cares for children with high behavior or medical needs but those are not the kids we generally care for. But there is no mechanism in place to research its efficacy or outcomes.

Specifically, the requirements for volunteers for our program are overwhelming due to the assumed risk of our facility. Our program type is required by WAC 110-145-2155 to be primarily staffed by volunteers, and the standards the WAC requires for in-service training are unnecessarily burdensome, adversely impacting our ability to recruit and retain high quality volunteers.

Volunteers are required to fulfill the same training requirements as paid full-time staff—24 training hours each year which is the same amount required for full-time clinical staff at crisis residential treatment facilities. Our volunteers are working with kids for 4 hours on average a month. That equates to 2 hours of training for every 4 working hours. We understand and support the need for ongoing training, but we believe a smaller number of higher quality training hours would be more effective.

3. Support DCYF in their effort to modernize their database.

In its decision package, DCYF requested \$28.3 million to, “modernize the child welfare information system.” We view this investment as mission critical for both DCYF and its partner agencies like Skookum.

The present system—called Famlink—does not include any way for service providers to get information out of it or put information into it. So all providers must make demands on DCYF staff time for even the simplest administrative tasks which makes us less helpful collaborators than we desire to be, and requires us to keep a duplicate set of paper files in our office which requires staff time to maintain and keep secure.

Famlink also lacks any mechanism for electronic foster parent application, a capability which the public reasonably expects.